

Legislative Testimony
Human Services Committee
HB 5355 AAC An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practice Pilot Program
Tuesday, March 2, 2010
Doug Keck, DMD

My name is Doug Keck and I am a practicing pediatric dentist in New Haven and Madison, Connecticut since 1992. I also teach in the pediatric dental residency program at Yale- New Haven Hospital and am the Connecticut State Leader of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry/Office of Head Start Dental Home Initiative which is a federal contract to provide “dental homes” for all Head Start children in the United States. Connecticut was chosen as one of the first six states in the nation to fulfill this obligation by 2013. I am writing to you in opposition to HB 5355, An Act Concerning an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practice Pilot Program.

I recently achieved a Masters degree in Higher Education in 2008, and my reflection and opposition to the proposed legislation comes from the educational standpoint as well as from the standpoint of a private practicing dentist. The Bill proposes a twelve month pilot program to begin “on or before July 2011”, however, the licensed dental hygienist needs to present documentation that the hygienist has “graduated from a Masters degree program in advanced dental hygiene practice from an institution of higher learning.” The math, unfortunately, does not “add” up. Also, all programs that offer degrees in higher education arena must go through stringent accreditation processes, which can take years. I am concerned about access to medical as well as dental health care for Connecticut’s citizens, but hope this Bill is truly not to expand the scope of practice of a dental hygienist over time.

I teach at the pediatric dental residency program at Yale-New Haven Hospital which is a two year, post dental school graduation residency that specializes in treating only children. The greatest amount of learning that these residents achieve in two years is in the behavior management of children and adolescents as well as those with special needs.

It is difficult to believe that a two year Masters program would be acceptable in teaching the medical and oral health management of the most vulnerable citizens in Connecticut. Some of the procedures proposed in the legislation of the pilot program would require more training and supervision than is specified in this bill.

Lastly, I am concerned with specific language in the bill that mentions that the providers in this pilot would work with Head Start programs. Thus far, I have recruited more than 50 providers across the State to assist in providing “dental homes” for Head Start students. The CT State Dental Association has recruited more than 1,000 providers to treat “Husky” patients across Connecticut. I have attended meetings representing Head Start, Yale-New Haven Hospital and the Pediatric Dentists of Connecticut. At all of these meetings collaboration between the Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, school based health services, the dental school, the community health centers, the federally qualified health centers, dentists and dental auxiliaries has occurred in providing access to care to the at-risk population in our State. It seems we are making progress in this difficult task without adding a pilot program that has no outcome metrics or by adding another member to the dental “team.”

Please let our collaborative efforts continue in making the progress that we have made thus far without adding confounding factors to the mix. I respectfully ask you to reject HB5355 at this time and to work with the dental profession in studying and forming the best “evidence-based” solution to the access to care problem in the State of Connecticut.

Respectfully Submitted.

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